

Healthy Forest Initiative; Healthy Forests Restoration Act

Assisting Communities Through Improving the Landscape

Following the fire season of 2000, two primary land and fire management concerns were brought full force to the surface: 1) years of attempted fire exclusion left our natural landscapes overgrown, unhealthy, and prone to severe wildfires; and 2) the rapid population growth in wildland areas had increasingly placed citizens, homes, and communities at risk from these fires.

A number of programs and initiatives grew from the National Fire Plan (NFP) to address these issues. Building on the NFP, the President introduced the Healthy Forests Initiative and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, both of which facilitate getting work done on the ground to better protect communities through planning and implementing fuels management projects.

Healthy Forests Initiative

President Bush launched the Healthy Forests Initiative in 2002 to reduce the risks to communities posed by severe, and potentially catastrophic fires. The Initiative included administrative actions designed to reduce procedural hurdles to quickly implementing hazardous fuels reduction projects on the landscape.

Healthy Forests Restoration Act

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act, proposed by the President and enacted by Congress in 2003, put several reforms into law that strengthened the Healthy Forests Initiative administrative actions.

Together, the Act and Initiative provide tools to enable land managers to be more effective in addressing the problems of hazardous fuels accumulations and to complete fuels management projects on the ground in a more timely manner, and to better protect communities in the wildland-urban interface.



Stewardship Contracting

Along with the Initiative and the Act, Congress extended authority to the BLM in 2003 to offer stewardship contracts. This allows managers to enter into long-term contracts with private-sector businesses to conduct fuels management projects and use the by-products to offset project costs. As a result, more projects can be accomplished and new cottage industries are emerging to use the biomass being removed.

Helping Local Communities

While these new tools facilitate improving the health and fire-resistance of the landscape, they also can benefit communities when used in conjunction with another tool - Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP).

These plans, developed at the local level with funding and technical support from the BLM and other agencies, enable communities to influence how and where federal agencies implement fuels reduction projects. The tools contained in the Initiative and Act streamline the process to accomplish these projects on the ground.

Combined, the Initiative, the Act, Stewardship Contracting, and CWPPs are improving the health of the land while creating new businesses and more fire-resilient communities.

For more information, visit:
www.fireplan.gov
www.healthyforests.gov
www.fire.blm.gov/index.htm
www.nifc.gov

